

[Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104; 1 Cor. 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23]

When was the last time you got really excited about something? Children find such a question easier to answer. They get excited about snow falling. Or an unexpected day off from school. Kids get excited about a test being canceled, a favorite show starting on TV, a grandparent showing up on the doorstep, finding a brightly colored leaf on the sidewalk. Kids are thrilled when the first day of summer finally arrives, when they get to put on their bathing suits, when the bike comes out of the garage and gets dusted off for a new season.

But what thrills an adult like that? Does a bright, sunny day fill us with pleasure? Does a Saturday morning excite us with its possibilities? Do our hearts dance at the sight of someone, anyone? Is there something we yearn to do so much that, when it comes time to do it, we are beside ourselves with joy?

For too many of us, those are hard questions to answer, because the answers may be flat and disappointing. Lots of us might reply that we don't have time to experience those sensations because there are always obligations blocking our view of possibility and hope. Our relationships may be too complicated, tricky, risky, to feel simple pleasure at the sight of those we love.

Of all the places we might look for the vaguest hint of excitement, however, church is probably close to last on too many lists. Admit it. Think of this string of associations: holidays, birthdays, vacations, a raise in pay, a better job, going to church. Which of these things is least likely to inspire excitement?

I hope, for your sake, that our parish is one of the more engaging and vital communities you're involved with, that it's a real source of celebration and life. But in the event that it might not be (even if you're the pastor!) then let's broaden the meaning of church for a minute. Consider the body of believers over 20 centuries who have been living and dying for the Christian Faith. Imagine the experience of the little group who first followed Jesus around for three years, heard him teach, witnessed his miracles, watched him die, stood at the empty tomb, saw him and ate with him again, and viewed his departure. Do you suppose they were excited?

They ran back to a room where they prayed until the Spirit of God filled their house and their minds and hearts until they couldn't contain the experience. So they spilled into the streets and spoke of it to everyone, in every language, with every ounce of their zeal. They were so wildly excited that people thought they were drunk at 9 o'clock in the morning, coming in from an all-nighter someplace, veterans of a pretty long party. That kind of exuberance didn't usually come from the synagogue!

But the energy of this thrilling time didn't end on Pentecost. Paul talks about the driving force of that whole first generation of believers who claimed Jesus as Lord. Their experience was so powerful, it transcended everything else about their lives. It didn't matter anymore if they were Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, men or women -- no matter who they were or what they did, horrible sinner or near-saint, this Good News, this Gospel put them in the same relationship to God.

This was unthinkable then, and to many it's unthinkable now. For the lowest, poorest, and rottenest folk, this was the best news they'd ever heard. For those who had been doing quite well and were pleased with their spiritual progress so far, this news was somewhat more jarring, even disappointing. One group naturally got excited about the possibilities that were opening up to them. The other group got equally excited about finding a way to shut this road show down. What if people started believing this wholesale and tried to live as if it were true? This is what we believe and do at St. Martin de Porres Parish!

Here is what we have accomplished together at St. Martin de Porres Parish since Pentecost Sunday of last year, in addition to our regular ministries, services and liturgical celebrations:

Archbishop Allen Vigneron released his pastoral letter, or "letter from the pastor" to all parishes in the Archdiocese of Detroit: "Unleash the Gospel." The parish staff and leadership have been reading and reflecting about the vision the Archbishop has for us, with specific goals and objectives to be put into place.

We will have a two-night workshop in late August to review his letter,

which the Archbishop calls, not HIS letter, but OUR letter, the result of the Synod 2016 which took place two years ago. All Catholics had a part in that gathering.

One off-shoot of the Synod was to have a Festival of Ministries last fall. Dozens of parish organizations, ministries and services were showcased, and 90 people filled out a stewardship commitment sheet to participate in this parish work. Meetings were held to better coordinate our parish events, activities and fund-raising efforts so that our parishioners would not be overwhelmed and suffer from donor fatigue.

The parish has a one-year subscription to FORMED, an internet Catholic information service to help us and the unchurched and fallen-away Catholics to grow in our knowledge of our Catholic Faith and to deepen our spirituality. We hosted Frank Runyeon for our parish mission, which was well-attended and appreciated by our parishioners. Concerts featuring our Minister of Music John McGovern and our Contemporary Music group showed the diversity of prayer through music. I hope to plan an evening of Praise and Worship which will include both of our parish choirs.

Our Divine Mercy Sunday devotion included participation from five parishes. For the last three years, it took place at St. Faustina Church. All five pastors agreed to start rotating the locations of the devotion. I am happy to share with you that next year, it will take place here at St. Martin de Porres.

This past year was a year to celebrate more anniversaries. The Active Christian Women's Club celebrated its 40th anniversary, and Adrian Dominican Sister Noreen O'Connell celebrated her 70th anniversary as a consecrated religious woman and her 90th birthday. The Pope Pius X Council of the Knights of Columbus is preparing to celebrate its 65th anniversary, after having been resurrected four years ago.

Our church interior was enhanced with the addition of an image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, new Offertory collection boxes, and handicap access buttons on one set of our church doors, as well as at the parish center. We are starting construction on a new storage area in the parish center atrium, which will

greatly help out in the storage of our many collections and supplies for the various Christian Service projects.

Speaking of Christian Service, in addition to the many outreach projects we participate in, we hope to develop a service for those who need a ride to church. St. Martin de Porres Parish has established a good reputation for the outstanding outreach we do, thanks to your generosity of time, talent and treasure especially for our holiday collections and with the Warming Center.

We are looking for creative ways to improve attendance at our Eucharistic Adoration opportunities, and are open to ideas for continuing adult faith formation. Our number of those in liturgical ministries continues to decline. We need more ushers, altar servers, lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and choir members.

It is no secret that the demographics of the parishes in Warren are changing. Our older parishioners are becoming more infirmed. For the 70 to 90 members who die each year, there are few replacements. With the loss of membership comes a loss of income, which will impact our budget. On the bright side, our parish leadership is brainstorming for a large, once-a-year fund-raiser which will shore up our parish budget and keep us financially sound. I am asking everyone to prayerfully consider increasing your Sunday offering support, especially if you have not done so recently.

In the area of Christian Faith Formation and Religious education, our children are being brought into a closer relationship with Jesus. Our catechists show enthusiasm and their love of Christ. Retreats are available for catechists, and students and parents preparing for First Eucharist and Confirmation.

We are looking for greater opportunities to reach out to our Faith Formation parents to make the practice of the Faith a higher priority in their lives, as the first and best teachers of faith for their children. This may improve attendance at the Children's Liturgy of the Word, which we offer during the 11:00 AM Sunday Mass.

This year, for adult faith formation, we had an 8-week presentation called, "A Biblical Walk with Mary" and an 8-week Bible study seminar, "Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible" with Jeff Cavens.

We started an adult environmental activity making mats for the homeless from discarded and recycled plastic bags during Lent. And we hosted a community awareness program involving identity theft and other scams.

In the coming year, we hope to improve and expand our youth ministry and to work on better communication and collaboration among us.

Enrollment this past year was 174 students representing 123 families, with three families moving out of the area. 35 students were confirmed, and 11 children received First Eucharist. There were 16 families whose last child completed the program, meaning there are no more children from those families to be in the program next year. There were 10 new families enrolled in the program this year. Sadly, we had no candidates for the RCIA this year – no adult baptisms, Professions of Faith or Confirmation -- but we are working on that for next year.

Two persons were talking together before a large church which was being destroyed by fire. The first man spoke in a voice which could be heard above the voice of the firemen: "This is the first time I ever saw you at church." To this the second responded: "This is the first time I ever saw the church on fire."

It's time for each one of us in this church to be "on fire!" This will only happen when we ourselves encounter God in our hearts and in our lives. The highest form of happiness is union with God. This happens when we are fully human, fully alive, fully open to the Holy Spirit, and as Matthew Kelly puts it, "being the very best version of myself."

This is why Jesus Christ came; this is why He sends the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God will make us one with God. When we open ourselves to receive the Spirit of God, we will be strong enough to inspire and empower others. The Holy Spirit helps sinful people to receive the power of God to repent of their sins. The

Advocate will help us to stand next to God, and be “on fire” and to “Unleash the Gospel” in our parish, in our Archdiocese and in the world!

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise
and ever enjoy His consolations, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Veni Sancte Spiritus! Come, Holy Spirit! Breathe on us, O Spirit of God!

ALLELUIA and AMEN!